

3-1957

Churches of Christ Salute You with a Herald of Truth: March Report and April Sermons

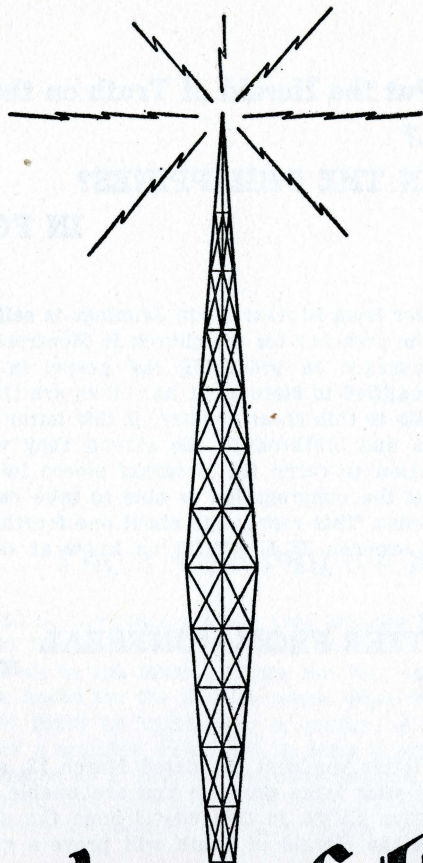
Herald of Truth

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.acu.edu/hot_docs

Recommended Citation

Herald of Truth, "Churches of Christ Salute You with a Herald of Truth: March Report and April Sermons" (1957). *Herald of Truth Documents*. Paper 111.
http://digitalcommons.acu.edu/hot_docs/111

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Herald of Truth Records at Digital Commons @ ACU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Herald of Truth Documents by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ ACU. For more information, please contact dc@acu.edu.

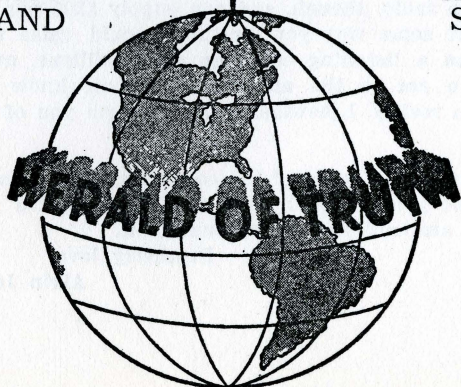


Churches of Christ

^m
SALUTE YOU

MARCH 1957
REPORT AND

APRIL 1957
SERMONS



**Shall We Put the Herald of Truth on the Air
IN MONTREAL?**

IN THE PHILIPPINES?

IN FORMOSA?

The following letter from Brother Alvin Jennings is self explanatory. Brother Jennings is the preacher for the church in Montreal. For several years he has been engaged in preaching the gospel in provinces in Canada and is well qualified to state what he thinks are the advantages of preaching over radio in this great country. If this letter should touch the hearts of friends and brethren to the extend they would like to help pay for this station to carry the program please let us know at once. Please note that the congregation is able to take care of \$200.00 per month of the expense. This represents about one fourth or one week out of each month's expense. PLEASE let us know at once.

LETTER FROM MONTREAL

March 31, 1957

Dear Brother Reese:

I appreciate the letter you sent me dated March 12, and can quite understand how with your large program you are unable to order the services of radio Station CKVL in this city. I hope the new time and set up of stations for the Herald of Truth will prove a great improvement.

The work here is progressing slowly. The city is so big that everything is very expensive—radio time, newspaper space, and property. We have been using the newspaper, having spent about \$1,000 during the six months of our stay and have seen some fruit already from it. We do want on the radio, though, and can supply \$200 per month with the Lord's help, if some way you brethren could raise the balance. This station claims a listening coverage of 4 millions, and it seems imperative that we get on the air. Please let me know if this can somehow become a reality. Likewise, I shall inform you of any further developments.

You may have already heard of the converting of Anastassios Stafilidis, Greek Catholic priest, which seed was first planted through the Herald of Truth. I am enclosing an account of it.

Brotherly love,

Alvin Jennings

FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Brother L. D. Lawrence advises that Brother Brashears in the Philippines would like to have the Herald of Truth and other radio programs on the air in the islands. From the very beginning of the broadcast we have hoped for the time to come when we might have the opportunity and funds to make this a reality. If the congregation of which you are a member would like to have a part in doing this work in the Philippines or if they are already sending support to the work there and would like to augment it with this broadcast please send us word as soon as possible and how much you can expect to send each month.

FROM FORMOSA

On Sunday night, April 14, it was the pleasure of the elders at Highland to sit and listen to a member of the church from Formosa tell of the work they are doing on that island. Four congregations on this island are made up mostly from refugees from Communist held China. These good people are presently broadcasting over two stations every day for thirty minutes each. Although they are unable to raise enough support among themselves to pay a full time preacher they feel that the radio programs there are worth too much to let go. They buy time over these two stations for a month, 30 minutes each every day, for a total cost of \$40.00. He is now hoping that sufficient funds may be raised in this country to put the Herald of Truth on the air in the island. The cost seems to be so little that it seems hardly possible that funds could not be raised. Yes, he said it would be worth many times its cost although broadcast in English. If you can help in any of these locations where the broadcast is so desired please let us know at the earliest.

The Address

P.O. Box 1858
Abilene, Texas

YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN

THE NEW BIRTH, NO. 1

By E. R. HARPER

Radio Sermon No. 271

April 7, 1957

Two men were staying at a hotel. They engaged each other in a conversation on Bible issues. Their discussions soon drifted to the subject of man's being "born again". Of course this discussion soon turned to the meaning of "water" in John 3:5. One man argued it had no reference to "literal water," but was "figurative" or "symbolic." By this he hoped to eliminate "baptism" from the passage. The second man replied, If the Lord did not mean "water" here, what word would he or should he have used had he intended to mean "water" in John 3:5? A sudden silence came over the first man. There was no better word the Lord could have used.

Here is the conversation recorded between the Lord and Nicodemus in John 3:1: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of WATER and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Various Explanations

That this passage poses problems for a large portion of the theological world is known to all of us. The outstanding difficulty in this passage is the word "water". Many are the attempts to rid this passage of that word. If literal "water" is here meant, then there is but one place in all the scheme of redemption for that kind of "water" and that is in "baptism". It is argued, therefore, if "water" here means water then to be "born again" man would have to be "baptized" and of course this being true many of the great systems of religion would have to undergo radical changes for they declare "baptism" to have no part in this New Birth. But we shall see as we progress with this study just what "water" here does or can mean.

At this point in our investigation I shall give my attention to various theories concerning the "new birth" and the method by which men say they "know when they are born again." I enter this with kindness, with malice toward none, but love for all mankind. I never mistreat any man because of his personal beliefs in religion. What I

am, I am from honest convictions. I believe what I ask you to do on this broadcast to be essential to your salvation. Any honest man is forced to believe that he is preaching the truth of God. Any position other than this compromises a man's honesty and his integrity in his own position. I cannot preach a compromising conviction to lost souls, believing that something else may be as near the truth as what I am preaching, or believing that I could be wrong. You will not, therefore, hear me at the close of my lessons tell you that it makes no difference what you believe or do, just so you are honest; and yet, you must be honest and I respect your honesty, but honesty must have with it the truth if you are saved. I shall always be mindful of the words of my Lord in John 8:32 where he says, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." I shall always keep in mind what Paul, that grand apostle to the Gentiles, said in Galatians, 1:6-9, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel. Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ." Now Paul, what shall happen to those who "preach another gospel"? Who "pervert the gospel of Christ"? He said "though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." From this, I know man may "preach another gospel"; he may preach a "perverted gospel". Paul declares that in preaching this "perverted gospel" they are "removed from Christ" and the "curses of heaven" are upon them. Hence, "one gospel" is not as good as another. This we need to learn before it is too late for Paul plainly shows "all gospels do not lead to Christ". I know you hear it said so many times "all roads lead to Rome". Under Caesar, May be! But under Christ, Never! Here a "perverted gospel" took them "away from Christ". Here they were not "all going to the same place" regardless of what they believed. Only the gospel as preached by these men can lead you "to Christ". We must know, therefore, that the gospel we have obeyed is not a "perverted gospel"; that it is not "another gospel" for they lead us "away from Christ". Now with this in mind I enter the discussion of our subject hoping you will remain with us throughout this entire series of four lessons on the "new birth".

Man's Testimonies

The "new birth" is thought to be a mystery that no man can explain; that you can only know when you are "born again" by the "feeling of regeneration" you experience in your heart. Hence "feelings" are given as evidence of man's being "born again from above." May I ask you, Do you honestly believe God has left the knowledge of so

vital a matter as the "new birth" up to man's feelings? This is the most serious question you will ever face. You cannot afford to be wrong concerning this "new birth" of John 3:5.

A Conversation

A few years ago here in Abilene, a man visited me one Sunday afternoon. We sat on my front porch from 1:30 until 5 discussing the Bible. Not until he was ready to leave did I ever penetrate his mind with his trouble. In leaving he said to me, "There is one thing I have against you people. You never know if you are saved or not". I asked him, Who told you such a thing? He said, Well do you know you are "born again"; "saved"? I replied, I certainly do. This startled the man.

How Did He Know?

I then asked him, How do you know you are saved or "born again"? His reply was, "I have experienced the feeling of regeneration of the Holy Spirit in my heart" and "I know I am saved". He then asked me, How do you know you are saved? How do you know you are "born again"? He was astounded when I told him I had something better and more dependable than man's changing feelings. He asked what it was, to which I replied, I have the "word of God." I have "God's promises". I have "God's oath", his "immutable counsel" in which it is "impossible for God to lie", and read to him Hebrews 6, verses 17 and 18, which I shall discuss later today. I explained to him how he could not rely upon his feelings, for feelings are only the product of man's teaching. I showed him how the belief of error would produce the same feelings of assurance it believed that truth would produce. I said, were I to tell you that your child had been killed, if you believed in me, it would produce in you the same feeling of sorrow as if it had been true. Upon reaching home, finding the child alive and well, you now see you have believed a falsehood, but it has produced in you the same feelings as though it had been true. By this simple illustration I was able to open his eyes to the fact, man can't rely upon his feelings for assurance in anything for here he saw your feelings are positively the result of your teaching and, that error, could produce the same feelings of assurance as could truth. This we all know. I baptized him!

Please Explain To Me

Now here is what I asked this good man to explain to me: Please explain to me how I may know what you felt was the "regenerating power of the Spirit" when none of you who claim to have received the Spirit agree as to when, how, or what the Spirit does? How may I know which one of you really got the Spirit? They all disagree; this we all know. He became so confused he, for a moment, couldn't say a word. He had never been asked to explain how a man could know

or determine which of these conflicting claims of the Spirit was right and which was wrong so I could understand.

Conflicting Theories

To illustrate what I mean I give you five different, conflicting claims of the work or, operation of the Spirit, as I did him. One theory is, That before the foundation of the world God selected the number to be saved and into their hearts he sends his Spirit in his own good time and regenerates their hearts and saves them and then because they "are saved" they "believe and repent". A second theory says that God did not select from the foundation of the world those to be saved, that man is not saved before he believes, but, that God sends his Spirit to regenerate the heart and produce faith in order that man may be saved at faith. Each denies the other's theory, yet each relies upon the "feeling of regeneration" he thought he got from the Lord. Another theory is, that, Man is baptized with the Holy Spirit and this baptism cleanses, saves us, while a fourth theory says, man in receiving this Holy Spirit baptism is holy sanctified, receives a second blessing and can't sin. The last I mention here is that theory that claims to have received the Spirit in baptismal form and are therefore able, so they claim, to perform miracles. My question to this man and to you, was, and is, How may I know by my feelings which of these conflicting theories is right and how may I know by my feelings which is wrong? Another thing, What right does one of these have to tell the others they are wrong and did not receive what they claimed? They tell you, what you tell me, that you did not experience their feelings. Now each of these will give me the same Scriptures; each will tell me he knows he is right; each will tell me he got the Spirit just as he says he did because he has felt "the regenerating power" or may be the "Baptism of the Spirit", yet each got it at a different time; in a different way; and it produced entirely different results, and neither of them fellowships the other in their "particular" claims. Each, however, expects me to accept his theory solely upon the theory that he knows he is right because of this "feeling of regeneration". My question now is, How may I know which one of these is right? Each is honest and each denies the doctrine of the other, yet all claim the Spirit is doing all these things. They can't all be right! Some of them have to be wrong! We must have better assurance of salvation and the "new birth" than this! Do you really think the God of heaven would send his Spirit into the hearts of lost men and so confuse us as the above? If the Spirit is miraculously operating today, Why can't he get his groups all united? Why confuse us this way? Why tell one group he is right and then send his Spirit into another group and have them go before the world contradicting all the others? Friends, God's Spirit is not doing that! Feelings are the result of your teachings; not the work of the Spirit in all these conflicting claims. This is why you have such unbelief in the word; such

infidelity. They know God is not the author of such confusion (I Cor. 14:33) and that his Spirit taught unity and condemned division. (I Corinthians 1:10; John 17:21).

My Explanation

This man asked me, What is your explanation to all this? I began by assuring him that we had a better foundation upon which to build our hopes of salvation or of the "new birth" than our feelings. I convinced him if feelings had been sufficient evidence; if just so a man was honest was all that was needed, then Saul of Tarsus would not have had to change, for he said in Acts 23:1 "Men and brethren I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day". Yet he said of himself in I Timothy 1:15 that he was chiefest of sinners and had to be saved. I pointed out that Nicodemus of our lesson today, felt in his heart he was among the chosen of God, yet the Lord told him he had to be "born again" of water and the "Spirit". The people in Acts chapter 2 were said to be "devout men". They thought they were the chosen of God and in covenant relationship with him and yet Peter told them they had to "repent and be baptized every one of them for remission of sins." Cornelius in Acts 10 was honest and felt no sense of being lost yet the Angel told him to send for Peter and he would tell him words whereby he and all his could be saved. All these were devoutly religious and honest, but had they followed their feelings they would have finally been lost. They had to change their religions! Their feeling of security was based upon a false doctrine.

Had you ever thought that those who are taught to bow before images and before gods made by the hands of men feel just as secure as you do? Their feelings cause them to rejoice just as does yours, yet you hesitate not to tell them the same thing I tell you; that they are wrong and their feelings of security are based upon false evidence. If they can be wrong about their feelings, then had you ever thought that you might be? Why all those conflicting feelings of assurance? It is the result of their teachings, "believed and accepted". We must have something better upon which to base our hopes of "salvation" and the "new birth". This man asked me what my "better assurance" is?

God's Immutable Oath

I turned and read to him Hebrews 6:17-18 where Paul said "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us". Hence, I do not rest my hopes of salvation nor my knowledge of the "new birth" upon my feelings which may

become confused, but upon the "immutability" of God's "counsel", upon his "sure promises" in which it "it impossible for God to lie". I have his "oath"; I have his "promise"; I have his "counsel" and upon these I base my entire hope of salvation; the assurance of my "new birth". I believe God's word. I believe his promises. One thing I know: God's "oath"; God's "promises"; his "immutable counsel" are much more dependable foundations upon which to anchor all my hopes for eternity; upon which to rest my hopes of salvation and my "birth from above". than the weak, changing conflicting assurances of man's feelings.

The fourth in this series of lessons on the "new birth" shall be given over to a discussion of the subject, "My Assurance of Salvation". For instance, when the Lord said, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved". Mark 16:16; when Peter said "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins", unless God's promises are not true, having done what he commanded, I know I have the blessings he promised: "salvation and the remission of sins". Since God can't lie, I may now lie down at night in perfect peace for I have God's immutable counsel in which he cannot lie, that I am his child, saved and if saved I know I am "born again". I never have to doubt it for one moment for I have his, "oath" that his word is true and his promises sure. Listen for the discussion of this subject.

Conclusion

Now the reason for this sermon in the introduction of this study on the "new birth" is to convince you, if reason can reach your hearts, that you cannot afford to rest your "assurance" of salvation, or the "new birth" upon your feelings since feelings are always, without exception, the direct result of your teaching. The illustrations I have given in this lesson are unanswerable proof of this truth. The heathen "feels the same assurance" that he is right that you do, yet you hesitate not to tell him he can't go by his feelings. Neither do I hesitate to tell you that you can't rest the hope of your salvation on your feelings. You must have the "assurance" from heaven that you are saved and that assurance comes from, "belief of God's "oath"; of God's "promises"; of God's immutable counsel" in which it "is impossible for God to lie".

To my brethren who are listening to me today: Brethren these great and vital truths must reach every heart. It is our duty, our obligation to see that the truth concerning the "assurance of our salvation" is properly understood by the world. We must not abuse any honest soul who is striving for the truth of God's word, but we must see that a way is opened for him to know "how and when" he is "born again" and "saved". We have the greatest opportunity for reaching the most people of any generation in all the history of the world.

We have the radio; the television; the printed page; the private, personal teaching; the great field of evangelism; we have some two million people in America who are members of the church of Christ; we have the men capable of teaching this great truth; we have the wealth to send this gospel to the ends of the world, let us not sleep away our opportunities and then meet our friends at the judgment bar of God and have them say to us, Why did you not bring this beautiful story of the "assurance of our salvation" to us? To save ourselves we must do all in our power to save others. I am speaking now on this program possibly to some two million people. Our television programs today are reaching other thousands and, have, ever since they started and yet we haven't touched the hem of the garment. Let us thank all of you who have had fellowship with us in this great work, for without you it could not have been done. May those who are unsaved who are listening to me, obey your Lord today and let him save you. May the Lord bless you is our humble prayer in the blessed name of Christ our Lord.

THE MYSTERY OF SALVATION

BORN FROM ABOVE — No. 2

By E. R. HARPER

Radio Sermon No. 272

April 14, 1957

A number of years ago in conversation with a friend, we were discussing, what he called the "mystery of salvation". This good man thought the process of becoming a Christian, of being saved or "born from above" as he referred to it, was a "mystery" and being such no man could explain it.

Paul Speaks

I turned to Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus and began reading to him to show him what the "mystery" connected with our salvation is. He was surprised as no doubt you shall be. In Ephesians 3:1-6 Paul says, "for this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery: as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promises in Christ by the gospel". From this reading it is easily seen that in times past, during the Law of

Moses, from which law they were then freed, that under that dispensation the manner of "uniting the Jews and Gentiles in one body" was a "mystery"; But "now", in contrast to the "other ages" that which back then was a "mystery" has been explained. Paul expressly declares he "wrote this mystery down" that when we read his explanation, we may understand "his knowledge in the mystery of Christ". Now if we do not understand, it is not because it still remains a mystery; it is because we do not understand what we read. So long as a scientific law is not discovered, the law by which certain effects are brought about remains a "mystery" but when that law has been discovered and written down that all may read and understand it, then it no longer remains in the realm of the "mysterious." If we then fail to understand it, it is either that we have not read it or having read it we are not able to fathom its meaning. But Paul expressly says that we can "understand his knowledge in the mystery of Christ". Now, just what is that mystery? Is it "how we are saved"? Is our salvation; our "new birth" upon which the destiny of our souls depends, to remain all our life time a "mystery" so that we cannot explain the "how" of salvation or the "new birth" to others? Just what is this "mystery" of which Paul speaks? Here it is and it has nothing to do with our "personal salvation." That mystery was, "how" God would make the Gentiles "fellowheirs, and of the same body and partakers of the promises in Christ by the gospel". The Jew could not understand, neither could the Gentiles, how God after fifteen hundred years of separation of the two groups, was to make them "one in Christ". This "mystery" was, therefore, the "uniting" of the Jew and the Gentile into "one fellowship", into "one body" that they both might become partakers of the blessings promised in Christ. Millions do not understand it to this day and yet Paul says plainly he has received the explanation as to how this was to be accomplished. Hence, it no longer remains a "mystery". If we do not understand this mystery now, it is because we either have not read his explanation; do not believe his explanation; or admit we are not capable of understanding that which Paul says we "can" understand when we "read" it. Paul tells us how this is accomplished; that it is, "by the preaching of the gospel". By this gospel, the barrier between Jew and Gentile was to be broken down and in God's scheme of things they were to be saved alike, united "in the body of Christ" which is the "church". Our "personal salvation" has never been a "mystery" from the day of Pentecost until now. It is but a matter of believing what the Bible has revealed on the subject of the "salvation of man". In I Timothy, chapter 4 and verse 1 Paul in speaking of the Spirit says, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly". Speaks how? Expressly; that is, so man may understand! Now, if you will be so kind as to continue with us in this study of the "New Birth", I believe I can show you exactly

how man is "born again". This "New Birth" is brought about by as an intelligent a process as that of the natural birth. In fact, it is more easily understood than is that of the earthly, fleshly birth.

Things Equal to Each Other

In the development of this lesson on the "New Birth" I am discussing with you today the subject "Related Scriptures" or "Things Equal to the same thing are equal to each other". I shall now read to you from your Bible, "related Scriptures" on the "New Birth"; those regarding our "entering the kingdom of heaven" for those who are "born again" enter the "kingdom of heaven" and those who "enter the kingdom of heaven" are "born again". Incidentally, may I ask this question: If the kingdom is not here and will not be until our Lord returns, then what about those who are "born again", and who by this "new birth" were to be "in this kingdom"? If the kingdom is not yet set up, then there is no need for this "New Birth" for by it they were to enter this kingdom. This is something for you to ponder well in your minds! I am "Born Again" hence I am in the "kingdom" and will not have to await the second coming of the Lord for it to be set up. I am in it now; "Born Again"; "Born from Above". You who deny the kingdom is here, think this over!

I John 4:7 — "Who Is Born of God"

Now for the related scriptures — Those meaning the same thing! John, in I John 4:7, says, "Every one that loveth is born of God". In I John 5:1 the apostle says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God". and in I John 2:29 the writer says, "If ye know that he is righteous ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him". It is this same writer who records the words of Christ in John 3:5 where Christ said, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now we have "four things" by which we are said to be "born again". Are these four different ways to be born? Shall I develop me four theories concerning this "Birth from Above" or shall I try to harmonize these four expressions and find some sensible explanation to the meaning of each? John expressly says that those who "believe"; those who "love"; those who "do righteousness" are "Born of God" and Christ declares in no uncertain terms that this "New Birth" consists of both "water and the Spirit". Now it is declared by James in James 2:24 that it is "not by faith only". Now just as it is not by "faith only"; just so it is not by "love only", neither is it by a "righteousness alone" that excludes both "faith and love". We are forced to conclude, therefore, that all these are parts of this "New Birth" and when he refers to the "believer" being born again it must be a faith that includes "love" and "doing the righteousness of God". Each of these expressions is forced to include all that is incorporated in the others. For instance, faith includes "love and doing righteousness". Love includes "faith and

doing righteousness". "Doing righteousness" has to include "faith and love". Each expression is "all inclusive" and includes everything man must do to be "Born Again". Man is saved by no "one act" alone. He is not "born again" by any "one act" alone. Now since those who "love"; who "believe"; who "do righteousness" are all "Born of God" it must "follow as the night the day" that this "love"; this "faith"; this "doing righteousness" all include the Lord's own statement of being "born of water and Spirit". Also this "born of water and the Spirit" must include the element of "love"; of "faith"; and of "doing the righteousness of God". They are all parts of the "New Birth". Each part when used alone in a verse is used to include the entire process by which we are "born again". From this we are forced to conclude that no man is called a "believer" unless he has "loved God"; unless he has "done the righteousness of God" and unless he has been "born of water and the Spirit". Just so no man is considered as "loving God" unless he has likewise "believed in God"; has "done the righteousness of God" and unless he has been born of water and the Spirit". This is unanswerable unless we force four ways of being "Born Again". But all know there is but "one birth" and that "one birth" is brought about in "one way". There are not; there cannot be "four" different ways of being "born again". Hence, to be a "saved believer", one is forced to be "born of water and the Spirit". To be a saved "lover of God" one must likewise be "born of water and the Spirit"; to be one who "does the righteousness of God", you must also be "born of water and the Spirit" for each of these persons is said to be "born of God". It matters not where you go, so long as "things that equal the same thing are equal to each other" the above truths from these "related passages" must be accepted as fundamental and unanswerable. Every way you turn "water" confronts you in the "new birth" of John 3:5.

Scriptures Analyzed — The Born Again Believer

Let us now take up these passages one at a time and analyze them and see what we find. First, who is this "believer" of I John 5:1 who is said to be "born of God"? Is it just "faith alone"? or a "faith that obeys God"? In Romans 10:10-17 Paul says, "They have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord who hath believed our report"? From this there is but one conclusion, the "believer" here was the one who had "obeyed the gospel". But John's believer was "born again", hence, the "born again Believer" here was and is the man who "obeys" the gospel of Christ. From this conclusion there is no escape! In I Peter 2:6-7 the apostle says, "wherefore also it is contained in the Scriptures, Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be ashamed. Unto you, therefore, which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same became the head of the corner". Here again we see the "believer", is the one who was "obedient". The "unbeliever", the one who was "disobedient". Paul

in Romans 1:5 says he received "grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations" and in Romans 16:25-26 he says, "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for obedience of faith". From this we find that John's "believer" who is "born of God" is not one who has "faith alone" but it is the man whose faith has "obeyed the gospel of Christ". We now find that one, to be a "born again believer" must, therefore, have "obeyed the gospel" of our Lord.

Who Loves God

Since John also declares in I John 4:7 that "every one that loveth is born of God" it is imperative that we know what it means to "love God". In I John 5:2 this same writer says, "by this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments". The next verse says, "For this is the love of God that you keep his commandments". John, in that book commonly called the "gospel by John" chapter 14, and verse 21 says plainly, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me". Now we have found that the man who "loves God" is the man who "keeps the commandments of God." But the man who "loves God" is also "born of God". Since "things that equal the same thing are equal to each other" we are forced to conclude that the man who "keeps the commandments of God" is the "only" man who is or can be "born of God". We conclude, therefore, that this "new birth" is brought about by "keeping the commandments of God" for you cannot separate "loving God" from "keeping his commandments" for said John, "this is the love of God that you keep his commandments".

The Great Commission

May I ask you this most vital question just here? Is the Great Commission, as given by the Lord himself in Matthew 28:18; Mark 16:15-16; and Luke 24:46-49 "excluded" from this "love" in I John 4:7, and from "salvation and the new birth" or is it "included"? For instance, the Lord said in Mark 16:16, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved". Now the man who is "saved" is also "born again". Can you, therefore, blot from the "new birth" Mark 16:16, since "things being equal to the same thing are equal to each other" and all these equal "Salvation" or being "born again"? We must conclude, therefore, that the one who "loves God" and is therefore "born of God" has to be the man who "keeps the commandments of God", and these

commandments of God include the Great Commission, in which we have baptism "twice commanded" and it is "in baptism" we get "water" in John 3:5 and the "only" place we can get it.

Doeth Righteousness

Now, just what is meant by the expression in I John 2:29 where John says, "Every one who doeth righteousness is born of God"? Does this mean to just "believe only"? Is it possible to conclude from this that all he means for man to do to be "born of God" is just "believe"? Surely not, when James says in James 2:24, "It is not by faith only"! Yes, James says just that! Then what is included or meant by the expression "he that doeth righteousness is born of God"? We have found that the "saved, born again believer" is always the "obedient believer", never "faith only". We have found that the "saved, born again, lover of God" is the man who "keeps the commandments of God". Just so, we shall find the same thing here. Friends, you can't separate the "new birth" from obeying your Lord! Turn with me now to Psalms 119:172. Here David says, "My tongue shall speak of thy word; for all thy commandments are righteousness". Now John said, "every one that doeth righteousness is born of him". Keeping the "commandments of God" is "doing righteousness". Therefore, the man and only that man who "keeps the commandments of God" is "born again". Asks one, Brother Harper, is baptism a part of the righteousness of God? Will you listen now to the words of Christ himself as he came to be baptized of John in Jordan? You will recall that John at first refused to baptize the Lord and then it was that Jesus said to him, "suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him"; that is John baptized Jesus (Matthew 3:15-16). Here baptism is positively identified with the "righteousness of God". Now who is it that is "born of God"? It is "every one that doeth righteousness". What is the "righteousness of God"? The keeping of his commandments. What is baptism? It is a part of this "righteousness of God" which Christ said it "becomes us to fulfill" (Matthew 3:15). You may not choose to do that which is "becoming" of those who would follow Christ, but as for me I am ready to follow my Master in being baptized, in doing the "righteousness of God" and leave the rest to him. In the language of Joshua I say to you good people, "choose ye this day whom you will serve", but "as for me and my house we shall serve the Lord". Christ said, "except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God". Baptism is the only place where "water" is connected with the scheme of redemption. Refuse it if you must, but in so doing remember the Lord said you are refusing to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). Yes, again we have found you can't separate the "new birth" of John 3:5 from "keeping the commandments of God".

It is not by merely "believing and trusting". This "new birth" is by that believing, trusting faith, "obeying the gospel — the commandments of the Lord". From this conclusion there is no escape.

Born of Water and the Spirit

You may be ready now to suggest, You can't connect John 3:5 with "keeping the commandments of God!" I believe I can.

Friends, this "new birth" of John 3:5 puts one "into the kingdom of God". This we all believe because the Lord said so. Turn with me now to Matthew 7:21 and listen to our Master as he also says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven". Here at the judgment scene we find people claiming to be in the kingdom, "born again" who were not. They are pictured here as arguing with him at the judgment, only to be rejected solely upon the grounds they would not "do the will of his Father in heaven". But to "do the will of the Father" is to "enter into the kingdom". To "enter the kingdom" is to "be born again", John 3:5. Therefore, since "things that are equal to the same thing are equal to each other", it has to follow that man is "born again", not by "faith only" but by "doing the will of the Father", which is the same as "keeping the commandments of God" or "doing the righteousness of God and born of Water and the Spirit". There is no escape from "keeping the commandments" of the Lord to be "born again".

Conclusion

We have now found from these "related scriptures" that the "born again believer"; the "born again lover of God"; the "born again doer of God's righteousness"; and the man "born of water and the Spirit" have all had to "keep the commandments of God" — had to "do the will of the Father in heaven". We conclude, therefore, that the "new birth" is very easily understood. It is brought about by "obeying the gospel of Christ" for Christ said, "go preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15) and Paul tells us it is the "power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). To obey this gospel one has to believe in Christ; (Acts 8:37) has to repent of his sins, (Acts 17:30) and with faith in his heart that Christ is the Son of God he is to be baptized that he might be saved, (Mark 16:16). Having done this he is "saved"; has "forgiveness of sins" (Acts 2:38); and the man who is "saved" is "born again". In this you have both "water" and the "spirit"; The Spirit directing, convicting through the word of God, (Acts 2:37; Ephesians 6:17), and the "water" as you are "baptized", buried with your Lord, (Romans 6:4). This is the "when" and the "how" you are "born again". Nothing else, no other plan has God given by which men are "born again".

In my next lesson I shall show you thousands who were actually "born again" in the first century and shall show you exactly "what"

they did and "when" they were said to be "born again". Be listening for these lessons. Write us for them. All four of them will be in one "booklet". Will you not now obey your Lord as given in the Great Commission and be "saved"; "born again"? May the Lord bless you and yours is our prayer in His Holy Name.

MULTITUDE BORN AGAIN

BORN AGAIN NO. 3

By E. R. HARPER

Radio Sermon No. 273

April 21, 1957

Driving along the highway one Sunday morning not too long ago I heard a man say something like this; Many people believe they can be saved any time they want to be saved. He then said: But they are mistaken for no man can be saved until the Holy Spirit is ready to convict him of his sins and regenerate his heart. This is the conception so many good people have concerning the "new birth" and salvation. I was brought up to believe this. The Sunday school I attended taught us we were totally depraved and therefore as dead religiously as a man in a casket. From this they concluded there was nothing man could do to be saved and they were invited to come to the "mourner's bench," or "altar." Here they were to beg the Lord to send into their hearts this "regenerating power of the Spirit" that it might destroy the depravity of the heart, regenerate them that they might believe on the Lord and be saved. They were honest then and are now. I have nothing, absolutely nothing, unkind to say about any one who so believes. Many of you who are now listening to me have later found out you were mistaken and I have baptized scores of you myself who once believed the above.

If a man is as dead religiously as a man in the casket then it would be impossible for him to "want to be saved"; to "hear the gospel"; or to "believe." It takes a miracle to cause the man in the casket to be able to hear or to obey. I have in my library a book that says God has to perform a "miracle" upon the heart before you can believe and obey Him. This being true then man has nothing to worry about. So long as you are dead, you can't, by this theory, hear and obey your Lord, so you are not to blame. If the Lord never sends you his Spirit into your heart to regenerate you neither can you help that, for according to this religious philosophy, you were born that way, inherited this condition. There is nothing, according to this theory, you can do about it until the Spirit enters your heart and destroys this depravity. Question: Suppose the Spirit never comes to you, Who is to blame for your condemnation? Can't be you for you

had nothing to do with being in that condition. This would make God responsible for the condemnation of all who are lost. If, however, all men are "born" in this condition, and God sends down his regenerating Spirit into one lost man's unregenerated heart then he is obligated to send that same Spirit into every man's heart or he becomes a respecter of persons. Here are two men, both born totally depraved; both born sinners, as per the theory; both dead spiritually and neither of them can do anything to be saved until the Spirit comes: Now the Lord sends his Spirit into the heart of one of them but does not send the Spirit into the heart of the other man. Who becomes responsible for the damnation of the second man into whose heart the Lord failed to send the Spirit? This can't be answered without making God a respecter of persons! We have found in our study thus far that those who were "born again" were said to "believe"; to "love"; to "do the righteousness of God"; to have been "born of water and the Spirit" and each time we found that it included "doing the commandments of God." We therefore concluded that those "who obey the will of God"; the "gospel of Christ"; who "keep God's commandments" are those who are "born again," I John 2:29; I John 4:7; I John 5:1; I John 5:2-4; John 3:5; and Matthew 7:21.

What It Is!

Now today I shall introduce another passage in which we find this same "birth" mentioned. In I Peter 1:22-25 the apostle says, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently"; now notice especially the next verse, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, (That is, not of the flesh) but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." Now what is this "word of God, this incorruptible seed," "by" which they were said to be "born again"? Peter says in verse 25, "But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." Here are some people who Peter declares have been "born again," not by some miraculous operation of the Spirit but "by" the "word of God" and he says explicitly that this "word" is the "gospel." Hence, there is no other conclusion to be drawn from this other than man is "born again" by obeying the gospel of Christ. This being true then it is no trouble to tell a man "how to be born again" and "when" this new birth takes place. I suggested this "new birth" is more easily understood and explained than the fleshly birth and it is. I cannot understand how it is possible for a child to be formed by the natural laws of God and brought forth a living soul with its mental faculties to grow and develop into men and women as we are today. I can't explain that, neither can you. But I can very easily understand how this "new birth" is begun and consummated; that is perfected. I can understand why it is called a "birth" since a "birth" is a "coming forth" from "one state" or "condition" to "another"; since it is a "delivery" or a "translation" as Paul calls it

in Col. 1:13. The child is "brought forth" or delivered" from its condition or state with its mother into a new environment or state, hence, it is called a "birth" or a "delivery." Just so man, at the age of accountability, not before, reaches the state of sin; he is in the Devil's kingdom; he is then in a lost condition; now he is delivered, brought forth, translated out of this state or condition or place and being delivered from Satan's kingdom into the "kingdom of God's dear Son" it is called a "birth," a "translation," or a "new creature" as Paul says in II Cor. 5:17. Now this is brought about by a sensible process, by an intelligent law of God and Peter says that law is "by" the "word of God" which he definitely called the "gospel." If I know what the gospel is then I know how this new birth is to be perfected; namely, by "obeying the gospel", I Cor. 15:1-4. Paul says in II Thess. 1:8-9 that God is going to "take vengeance on those who obey not the gospel punishing them with everlasting destruction from the presence of God and the glory of his power" and he said to those in Corinth they were "saved by the gospel." It is too plain to be so confused. If I know how to obey the gospel, I know how to be saved. To be saved and to be "born again" are one and the same thing. All who are "saved are "born again." All who are "born again" are "saved." But they are all saved by "obeying the gospel"; therefore they are all "born again" by obeying the "word of the Lord" which is the "gospel." There is no answer to this and this can be understood and explained to others. Now let us see if this is what those in I Peter 1:23 did who Peter said were "born of incorruptible seed—by the word of God."

To Whom Written?

Turn with me now to I Peter, chapter 1 and verse 1 and see to whom Peter wrote this letter. He says "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Now these were "saved" and "begotten again." They were, as Peter says in verse 23, "born again." Question: Is this "birth" of I Peter chapter 1 the same birth as that of John 3:5? Did the Lord send Peter out to preach a different birth to that he said men must have in John 3:5? Certainly not! Now, I promise you I can find out what these of I Peter 1:23 did in being "born again."

Who?

In verse 1 just read, he said among those to whom he was writing were the saved in "Cappadocia, Asia and in Pontus." Now if I can

find where the "word" which Peter called the "gospel" was ever preached to them and find out what they did, I shall then know beyond doubt "how" and "what" men have to do to be "born again." In this "new birth" man is not wholly passive as in the fleshly birth and this we must know, else there would be no reason for the gospel to be preached to any of us.

Those to Whom Preached

Turn now with me to Acts chapter 2. It is that memorable Pentecost after Christ's glorious resurrection. The Lord has sent his apostles to Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth. It is the birthday of the church; the beginning of Christ's reign on David's Throne; the inauguration of the "new covenant" of Jeremiah 31:31. The apostles begin to speak "as the Spirit gives them utterance." This is heard throughout the city and the multitudes gather. Where are they from? Verse 5 says they were "Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." The Jews will not have to be gathered from the nations to Jerusalem to set up the kingdom, some time in the future. This glorious event has already taken place nearly two thousand years ago. Now there were present here in Acts 2, men from "Cappadocia, Asia, and Pontus," men to whom Peter wrote his letter, for verse 9 says, "and how hear we every man in our tongue, wherein we were born?" and he names, "Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia." How does he know these people from "Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia," were "born again, by the word of God"? Peter was the spokesman on this occasion. He now writes a letter to them years after this great sermon on Pentecost and tells them they are "born again." He should know for he delivered the sermon; and now by the Spirit of God he is writing them, telling them they have "been born again 'by' the word of God."

What Had They Done?

You are ready to ask, Brother Harper can you find out what these people to whom he wrote this letter had done? I can and it is a pleasure so to do. In Acts chapter 2, Peter told them they had with wicked hands crucified the Lord and God had raised him from the dead to "sit upon the throne of their father David" and concluded by saying to them, "let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made this same Jesus whom you have crucified both Lord and Christ." Having heard this they were "cut to their hearts" and asked "what shall we do?" To this question Peter replied, "repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Verse 41 says, "As many as gladly received their word were baptized and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." The last verse said, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." In my last lesson I promised to show you thousands who were

saved, "born again." Here they are! 3000 of them! Now, all these who "repented and were baptized" had "remission of sins"; were "saved"; and the "Lord added them to the church" and Peter said they were "born again" (I Peter 1:23). To what church did he add them? Just one answer: To the church He built! (Matthew 16:18). This is unanswerable and is the truth! This preached and obeyed today would unite us in this one church just as it united them on this occasion for they were "all together" (verse 44). Our question was, What had these, to whom Peter wrote this letter from "Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia," done prior to his letter? Ladies and gentlemen this second chapter of Acts where we find present the very people to whom Peter wrote this letter telling them they were "born again 'by' the word of God" and to whom Peter actually delivered this sermon; they had done exactly what churches of Christ everywhere are preaching and teaching people to do. They had "believed Peter's sermon" Acts 2:36; they had "repented of their sins" and they had been "baptized for the remission of sins" every one of them (Acts 2:38). Now after they had done this, and not before, Peter writes to them and says "you are born again" by "the word of God"—this "incorruptible seed." Did he know what he was writing to them? Was this the "birth" of John 3:5? If it is then we have found "what" these to whom he wrote this letter had done to be "born again." They had "believed in the Christ"; had "repented of their sins"; and had honestly been "baptized, every one of them, for the remission of sins" and the Lord had actually "saved them" and had "added them to the church" (Acts 2:47). Now my good people there is no answering this. This is what they had done and this is the "new birth." This "incorruptible seed" the "word of God" enters your heart as the "corruptible seed" of the fleshly birth enters the womb; this "incorruptible seed," the word of God, enters the heart and produces faith. In Luke 8:11 the Lord himself says, "The seed is the word of God" and in verse 15 the Lord says it must fall "into good and honest hearts." This seed, God's word, convicts us of our sins and brings about repentance for those sins. This penitent believing heart submits to the Lord's command to be "baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" at which time you are brought forth into a "new life" (Romans 6:4); delivered from Satan unto God; from sin unto righteousness, as here in Acts 2:38-47. This is the "new birth" and nothing else can be for Peter declares that those who have done just this are "born again."

What of the Spirit?

You will recall the Lord said in John 3:5, "you must be born of water and the Spirit" to enter into the kingdom. Where is the Spirit in this "birth" of Acts 2? Where is the "water"? Well sir, the Spirit is convicting every one of them of his sins. How? Through the preaching of the "word of God" for verse 37 says, "when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts." Not when they were "operated on

from above by some mysterious act of the Spirit" but when they "heard this"! Heard what? This sermon, this "word of God," the "gospel" the Spirit had just delivered to them through the apostles. The Spirit convicts you today by the preaching of God's word. The word is his sword, Eph. 6:17 and with his sword, his word, he pierces your heart and brings you to conviction just as here in Acts 2:37, otherwise why send missionaries into heathen lands? The "word" is the "seed of the kingdom" and by it this kingdom is propagated. Here the Spirit acted in this "New Birth." Hence, the Spirit has a part in the "New Birth."

Water

One may ask, "Where is the "water" in this illustration? Simple when understood! They were commanded to be "baptized for remission of sins." Here is your "water." In "baptism" and baptism alone, do you find "water" in God's scheme of things. John was baptizing in the "waters of Jordan." Yes, in Matthew 3:16 it says, "And Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water." In Acts 10:47, Peter asks, "can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized" and Philip and the eunuch in Acts 8:38 "went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more." Yes, baptism in Acts 2:38 was "water baptism" for it is positively contrasted here from any manifestations of the Spirit. So those in Acts chapter 2 got the "water" and they were directed by the "Spirit" as the Spirit guided the apostles in the revelation of the truth to them. Therefore, they were "born of water and the Spirit"; both had a part, and it was "by the word of God" just as Peter described it in I Peter 1:23. Peter, How do you know these from "Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia," were "born again" "by" the "word of God"? He was there, did the preaching, and saw them baptized by the direction of the Holy Spirit. My friends, there is not an example in your New Testament where the Holy Spirit ever operated on the unsaved man, separate and apart from the preaching of the Word of God. The Spirit operates on the sinner's heart always "through or by the Word of God." When you hear the Word of God revealed to us by the Spirit it is then you are being led, directed, and operated on by the Spirit. Read Revelation, chapters 2 and 3 and hear John say, "let him that hath an ear to hear, hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." How was the Spirit to them? Through these letters to the seven churches in Asia.

Conclusion

Now these in I Peter 1, to whom he had preached in Acts 2, "repented and were baptized for remission of sins" which the world in general denies as essential. But they were, "Saved—had remission of sins—were added to the church by the Lord"—and Peter declared

they were "born again by the Word of God." The Spirit guided in this conversion through the apostles preaching and 3000 were baptized, hence they were "born of water and the Spirit"; were in the "kingdom," Peter told them Christ was at that time "raised to sit upon David's throne." This churches of Christ believe and teach. This is "how" and "when" you are "born again"; this "is" the new birth. It is brought about by believing the word of God, repenting of your sins, and being baptized for remission of your sins, believing and confessing your faith in Christ, as these of "Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia" in Acts 2 and I Peter 1:23 did, of whom Peter said they, "were born again." Will you not do exactly what these have done and trust the Lord to do what he promised them he would do? May God bless you is our prayer in Christ's holy name. Write for this series of lessons on "You Must Be Born Again" and study them with your Bible in your hand.

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

NEW BIRTH NO. 4

By E. R. HARPER

Radio Sermon No. 274

April 28, 1957

As I come to close this series of studies on the subject of the "New Birth," I wish to thank all you who have written in for them. They are in a nice booklet which contains all four lessons. Even a child can understand the lessons. The "new birth" is not something "mysterious," "non-understandable" but is brought about by a plain, reasonable, understandable law, which your Bible calls the "word of God," the "gospel of Christ." You must by now be convinced that churches of Christ do believe and teach that all men must be "born again" to be saved. Because we believe it is brought about by a reasonable, sensible, understandable process and not therefore so mysterious that no one can explain it, we are accused of not believing in the "new birth." We all believe and teach you must be "born again" but we differ as to "how" and "when" it is done. Now the vital question must be, Who is correct? I believe my evidence of salvation is based upon something certain, sure, and steadfast, not something "mysterious." That evidence I shall now present.

My Assurance of Salvation

For me to ask you to do what I preach, I must have evidence that it is the truth revealed to us in God's word. That evidence must be as sure as God is sure; as true as God is true; as certain as God is certain. There must be no way for it to be wrong, else my preaching is vain. We must "know" what we are doing when we come to influence

souls by our preaching. Just anything will not do, else God would not have taken such pains to give to us the "word of God" and then say to us "if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8,9); and then close the Bible by saying in Revelation 22:18-19 "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." We must not, under penalty of God's wrath, preach a "perverted gospel" nor shall we "add to" or "take from" God's revealed truth. Those whose names are written in the "book of life," if they cease to preach the truth shall have their names blotted from that book and out of the "holy city." Here is a positive declaration by the Lord that those saved may have their names "taken out of the book of life." Therefore I must not teach you error.

My Assurance

You are now ready to ask, If you do not base your hopes of salvation or the "new birth" upon your feelings, then upon what do you base them? I now read to you Heb. 6:16-20 where Paul says "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

Here I have God's "immutable counsel"; confirmed "by an oath"; I have his "promise," in which he "cannot lie," that he will do what he has promised. I believe him; I trust his promise; I believe his oath! This to me is the "end of all strife" just as Paul says in verse 16 above. Hear the words of the apostle Peter in II Peter 1:18-19 as he says "And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation, for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Ladies and gentlemen, I hope to impress upon your hearts and minds the fact that this "word of God" we

now have is a "sure word of prophecy." You can therefore depend upon what Christ says. We have his "oath" that we can and Paul says an "oath is the end of all strife."

Before I go further in my evidences of salvation, will you hear David as he says in Psalms 119:37 "Quicken thou me in thy way" and then verse 50 where he tells us what it is that quickens him? He says "This is my comfort in my afflictions: for thy word hath quickened me." This is exactly what Paul meant when he said, in I Cor. 4:15 "for in Christ Jesus I have begotten (quickened) you through the gospel," and Peter when he said "you are born again by the word of God." The Lord's spirit therefore begets you by the gospel.

Examples of Salvation—New Birth

Turn with me now, first to the words of Christ himself as he says in Mark 16:15-16 "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." I have God's promise; his "immutable counsel"; his "oath" in which he cannot lie that if I will "believe and be baptized" he will "save me." Now I have "believed" in him with a trusting, submissive faith and I have been "baptized" as he commanded. I now know I have the blessing of salvation unless God can lie, and this Paul said he could not do. I never have to wonder "if I am saved": I "know I am saved" for here is God's "promise" that he would save me if I would "believe and be baptized." Feelings can't surpass this assurance of mine for I have God's word; his promise; his oath!

Acts 2:28

Before Christ leaves to go back to his Father he promises to send the Spirit to the apostles to "reprove the world of sins, and of righteousness, and of judgment," John 16:8. He commands them to retire to Jerusalem. In Luke 24:49 Christ commanded "tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." The Spirit was to "guide them into all truth," John 16:13. They go to the city; the Spirit comes upon them and they "speak as the Spirit gives them utterance," Acts 2:4. This great crowd that assembled upon this occasion became convinced by Peter's sermon that they were lost, for the record says, "and when they heard this they were pricked in their hearts and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren what shall we do?" What convicted them of their sins? It was what they "heard." It was something they could understand. It was something sensible, teachable and having heard it and having understood it, they asked a sensible question, What shall we do? Here the Spirit was operating on their hearts for Christ said when he comes he will "reprove the world of sins." The question is, How did the Spirit operate upon their hearts? Was it in some "mysterious manner," separate and apart from the word or did he operate upon their hearts

"through" the preaching of the apostle? Every man who is converted is converted by the influence of the Holy Spirit. This no Bible student denies, but our question is, How does the Spirit operate? Does he do it independent of "means" in some mysterious feeling, or does he do it "through means" that are intelligent and understandable, therefore dependable as he did here in Acts chapter 2, "by the word of God?" Now the Spirit, in conviction and conversion, always operates on the alien sinner through or by the "word of God." Were it not this way we would need no missionaries to foreign lands. Christ gets converts by teaching them his truth. There can be no other method of converting men to Christ! Let us notice the conversion of the eunuch in Acts, chapter 8. The Spirit here was sent to the preacher, Philip; not to the eunuch, verse 29. Philip joined himself to the chariot in which the eunuch was riding. The preacher asked him, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" And the eunuch answered, "how can I except some man should guide me?" The point in question here is, The Spirit had a part in this conversion but instead of coming to the man to be converted and operating on him, he went to the preacher who had the word of God and sent him to the lost man. Verse 29 says "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, (not to the eunuch but to Philip) Go near and join thyself to this chariot." The lost man did not ask the Spirit to guide him, but said to Philip, "How can I except some man should guide me" and the record said, that Philip "began at the same Scripture and preached Jesus unto him." Turn to every conversion in your New Testament and the conversion was made by "preaching the gospel of Christ to the lost." Now these in Acts 2 were told to "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." These were the words of the Holy Spirit through the apostle Peter. When they did this the Bible said they were "saved; had remission of sins; members of the church the Lord built; and called believers." They were not told to just "believe" or "place your hand on the radio" or send me a "healing cloth." They had to obey God's word. Now Peter declares in Acts 10:34 that "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." This being true, then I "know" I am "saved" for I have done exactly what these in Acts chapter two (2) did and since God is "no respecter of persons" I know he gave to me exactly what he gave to them, "salvation"; "remission of sins" and Peter declared in I Peter 1:23 they were "born again, not of corruptible seed but by incorruptible, BY the word of God." Hence, if they were "born again" I know I was. How do I know it? I have God's "oath"; his "promise," his "immutable counsel" that it is true and Paul said God could "not lie." I shall never have to doubt for one moment therefore, if I am "born again"; if I am "saved" for I have the Lord's promises that to all who would "repent and be baptized in the name of Christ" he would give them "remission of sins." You can't have stronger evidences of assur-

ance than this for this is God's word. I press the question just here: Are feelings, that have so many conflicting testimonies, better assurance of pardon from sin, than the "word of God"; the "oath of God"; the "immutable counsel of God"? Churches of Christ "know beyond doubt they are saved" for we take God at his word and believe he will give to us that which he promises. In Acts, chapter nine, we have the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. In Acts chapter 22 we have Paul's own story concerning his conversion. The story is as follows: He had started to Damascus with authority to arrest Christians; on his way the Lord appeared to him. He said "who art thou Lord"? Then Saul asked "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do"? The Lord sent him to the city. Christ sent Ananias to him with the "word of God" for the Lord had told Saul, "There it shall be told you what you must do." Ananias came. He commanded Saul to "arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Saul obeyed at once. Did Saul get his "sins washed away" as the man of God had told him? What would you have done had you been the preachers in Acts chapters 2 and 8 if the Spirit had told you to give the answer "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" or, "arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins"? Would you have refused to tell them this? Many refuse today to give this answer. Why? What is wrong with these answers given here? Churches of Christ tell men what these were told! Now, I have done exactly what these did. As a penitent believer, I was baptized. God being no respecter of persons, why did I not get my "sins washed away also"? Yes, I know I am saved for I have done exactly what Saul did. What better assurance can one have than the blessed word of God?

Did the Water Do It?

But says one, Brother Harper, the water did not wash his sins away! No and the Bible did not say the "water washed his sins away." The blood of Christ cleanses every soul from sin, Matthew 26:28; I John 1:7-9. But that fountain is opened only to those whose hearts surrender completely to the Master's will. Suppose those in Acts 2 had refused to be "baptized for remission of sins" as the Spirit, through Peter, commanded? Suppose Saul had argued with Ananias about baptism. Would he have had his "sins washed away"? Would the "blood of Christ" have "cleansed them from all sins" in their rebellion? Friends, we must learn that when God speaks, if man is to enjoy the blessings God has promised we must do what God commands. Having done exactly what the Lord commanded as did these, I can lie down in peace, knowing that God has given to me everything he promised to them for he cannot "lie." Yes, I have something better than man's changing feelings. I have the "promise of God"; I have this "oath"; his "immutable counsel" in which he "cannot lie." Why should I ever lie down at night in doubt concerning my "salvation" or if I have been

"born again"? If these were "born again," who among you would deny that those in Acts 2 and Saul of Tarsus, were "born again"? If they were "born again" then I know I am for I have done "exactly" what they did. Have you?

Water Symbolic

Some one may be ready to ask, How do you know this water of John 3:5 is not "figurative" or "symbolic water"? This is very easily answered. When it is "figurative" the context shows clearly that it is. We are to interpret God's word literally unless the context shows otherwise. For instance, in John 7:38 the Lord said "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The context here shows this refers to the influence of a child of God. Again in John 4:13-14 we have the account of the conversation between Christ and the woman at the well. Christ said to her concerning the natural water from the well, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The context here shows this to be symbolic or figurative. Now notice in Matthew 3:16 it says, "And Jesus, when he was baptized went up straightway out of the water." In the very same chapter in which we have John 3:5; this time verse 23. It says, "John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there." The context here shows it is literal water. Surely you can now see how we may know the difference when it is "figurative" and when it is "just plain water." Now the same is true in John 3:5 where it says "except ye be born of water, (no symbolic or figurative language here. Just water) and the Spirit ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God." We had better just do what the Lord said!

Scholars Speak

In closing may I give you what outstanding religious leaders have said as to the meaning of John 3:5. Dr. Barners, Presbyterian, says "By water, here is evidently signified baptism." Adam Clarke, Methodist says "Baptism by water, into the Christian faith, was necessary to every Jew and Gentile that entered into the kingdom of the Messiah." Macknight, Scotch Presbyterian says, "a person's coming out of the water of baptism may have been called by our Lord, his being born again of water." John Wesley, a name on every tongue, said, "concerning 'water in John 3:5,' 'Be baptized—wherever baptism can be had.'" Willmarth, Baptist says "Baptism and Renewal by the Spirit are the conditions of true citizenship in the kingdom of God on earth." Time forbids that I should give scores of other scholars as Tertullian, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Hovey, Lightfoot, Meyer, Schaff, Wall, and others but I do want to close with the testimony of one of the greatest Baptist scholars of his day, Dr. John R. Graves. In the Tennessee

Baptist, October 30, 1886, page 5 he says concerning a letter to him on baptism in John 3:5 that it means "baptism." Hear him, "It means nothing else, and no Baptist that we ever heard or read of ever believed otherwise until A. Campbell frightened them away from an interpretation (now friends I want you to hear this) from an interpretation that is sustained by the consensus of all scholars of all denominations in all ages." Yes friends, "water" in John 3:5 means nothing else but "baptism" in "water." It does not refer to the "water therefore of the natural birth," and all scholars in all ages so agreed until less than 200 years ago. Think this over!

Conclusion

And thus you have my "assurance" my "evidence"; my "guarantee," that I am "saved"; "born again" of "water and the Spirit" for I have "God's oath"; I have "God's immutable counsel"; his precious "promises" and the scholarship of the world, that I might "have a strong consolation" because I have "fled to him for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before me." Feelings are changeable but God's word is steadfast. All those who were said to be "saved" in the days of inspiration, had to "believe in the Lord; repent of their sins; confess him as the Christ, the Son of God; and be baptized by a burial and a resurrection" (Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-4). This is the "new birth" and it can be taught and explained to others. I have done the above. My brethren have also done this. Will you not also today obey your Master and trust his "oath"; his "counsel"; yea, his "promises" for salvation. Brethren this message of truth, we must send around the world. It needs to be on every radio; on every television station in the world. We have the money, the men, the opportunity. Let us not sin away our days of grace and stand at the judgment lost because of our indifference. May God bless and keep you is our prayer in the name of our blessed Lord.

FUTURE SERMON TOPICS FOR BROTHER HARPER

May 26 HEARTFELT RELIGION NO. 2
 June 2 HEARTFELT RELIGION NO. 3

~

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

MARCH, 1957

Receipts \$18,584.16
 Expenditures \$25,907.07*
 Expenditures exceed Receipts by \$7,322.91

*Five broadcasts in March.

This abbreviated financial statement is being made in order to have the report printed without delay. Any information other than these figures will be given gladly on request and up-to-date statements will be printed at regular intervals.

HIGHLAND CHURCH OF CHRIST
RADIO PROGRAM
Fifth and Highland
P. O. Box 1858
ABILENE, TEXAS

Non-Profit Organization

POSTMASTER:
FORM 3547 REQUESTED

RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED